



Asian American Recreation at Two Corps Lakes in California: A Hmong Case Study

PURPOSE: Research is being conducted at the U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station (WES) on the existing and future use of Corps of Engineers operating projects by ethnic minority customers. The purpose of this research is to obtain information on minority recreation preferences and needs so that Corps decision makers can use this information in project planning and operations. This technical note presents the preliminary findings of research among one group of Asian Americans and discusses the implications of this research regarding the Corps' working relations with all its Asian American customers.

BACKGROUND: This research effort is a response to Executive Order 12862: "Setting Customer Service Standards," and Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." Following an initial plan of study meeting held in Dallas, Texas, in 1995, four ethnic minority groups were proposed to be studied during the 3-year period 1997-1999. These groups include Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans.

In 1997, WES conducted six focus groups with fifteen Native American tribes in the Corps' Tulsa and Omaha Districts. The results of that research have been published as Natural Resources Technical Note REC-09 (Dunn and Feather 1998). In the spring of 1998 extensive fieldwork at five Corps projects across the United States was conducted to study first-hand the outdoor recreational habits and preferences of African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans. This fieldwork included interviewing Corps project personnel and minority visitors, ethnographically observing visitor recreational behavior, and conducting a series of focus groups with ethnic minority visitors. The results of the research conducted among African American visitors in 1998 has been published as Technical Note REC-10 (Dunn 1998).

This technical note presents the preliminary findings of research conducted among one group of Asian Americans, the Laotian Hmong. Two Corps lakes in California with high Asian American utilization were the focus of the 1998 investigation: Hensley Lake, located near Madera, California, and Pine Flat Lake, located near Fresno, California.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ASIAN-AMERICAN RECREATION: Gramann (1996) presents a detailed review of trends, policy, and research dealing with ethnicity and outdoor recreation. This extensive literature review was funded by HQUSACE and represents the first product of the Corps' work unit on Ethnic Culture and Corps Recreation Participation.

While his review deals with all four of the minority groups being studied, only his findings on Asian American recreational behavior will be discussed here.

The demographic profile of the United States is changing toward a more ethnically and geographically diverse population (Gramann 1996:10). At this time, Asian Americans represent only about 3.5 percent of the American population, but because this population group is so regionalized, future population growth may become highly significant to future Corps operations in the western United States. Even now, Asian Americans represent a significant customer base for the Corps of Engineers in the Pacific Coast States.

Gramann (1996:7) notes that California is projected to experience major growth in its already large Asian American population. The Pacific Northwest is another area with a relatively large Asian American population that will increasingly impact future Corps operations in that region. Yet relatively little has been published on the recreational habits of Asian Americans. Gramann (1996:59) noted that compared with other ethnic groups, there is a general scarcity of data on the outdoor recreation behaviors, styles, and constraints of Asian Americans.

Gramann (1996) identified three major recreation research themes: underparticipation and underutilization, outdoor recreation style, and acculturation and recreation. Each of these themes is briefly discussed in the following sections.

Asian American Underparticipation

Gramann identified the Dwyer (1994) study of recreation participation in 24 different activities as one of the few investigations to compare whites, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans. After controlling for income, age, gender, household size, and location of residence, Dwyer still found significant participation differences between groups across a variety of outdoor activities. In his analysis, Asian Americans were less likely than whites of similar socioeconomic status to participate in only 3 of the 24 activity types: swimming at pools, bicycling, and softball and baseball.

Other studies also suggest that Asian Americans tended to be more like whites than blacks in their recreation behavior. But Gramann (1996:30) notes that in the case of consumptive wildlife activities, such as hunting and fishing, similarities in participation rates between white and Asian groups may mask ethnically based differences in the meanings of these activities. For example, members of some Asian groups will use hunting and fishing as a form of subsistence, rather than as a form of recreation. Hutchison (1992) argues that the popularity of hunting and fishing among recently arrived Hmong immigrants in Wisconsin can be attributed to the fact that most Hmong men hunted and fished in their native Laos as a form of economic subsistence.

One of the most important factors affecting utilization of recreational facilities by minority groups is perceived discrimination. Previous technical notes have discussed this issue in depth. Gramann (1996:33) reports that within the recreation research literature, discrimination at recreation sites may be perceived by Asian Americans as well as African Americans. This perception will invariably negatively impact recreation participation. For example, Lee (1972) noted that Chinese residents of a California community were hesitant to visit a nearby regional park for racial reasons. One Chinese informant commented:

Garfield Park is not for Chinese. They cannot feel that it is their own. After all, it is only very recently that they have been permitted to use it. It belongs to the White American culture (Lee 1972: 79).

Asian American Recreation Style

“Recreation style” has been defined as “the unique quality of recreation behavior that arises from variation between ethnic groups in group size, participation motives, spoken language, and attitudes toward natural resources, including facility-development preferences (Gramann, Floyd, and Ewert 1992). The general lack of published information on Asian American recreation is particularly evident here. Most studies of style differences in outdoor recreation have compared Anglo-Americans with Hispanic Americans. Gramann (1996) notes that Federal agencies’ concern with ethnic variation in recreation style frequently reflects the pragmatic concerns of resource managers that the behaviors of some minority groups may result in inferior recreation experiences for non-minorities, vandalism of facilities, and the degradation of natural resources.

We have seen that Asian American recreation participation tends to resemble that of white groups. Whether that resemblance holds true for Asian Americans’ recreation style is much less clear. Based on the author’s interviews of Corps rangers and managers at the two California lakes being considered, two interrelated factors must be considered, specific ethnic identity and length of time in America. Asian Americans as a group have tremendous cultural diversity. It would be a serious mistake to view them as a culturally homogeneous bloc. Groups with a long (multiple generations) history in America such as Chinese and Japanese Americans in California tend to have a far greater degree of cultural assimilation to mainstream American culture. Cultural “assimilation” refers to an ethnic minority’s acceptance of the dominant cultural pattern of the host society (e.g., language, religion, diet, dress, and child-rearing practices) (Gramann 1996:ix). The recreation style of such highly assimilated Asian Americans would be less ethnically distinctive. More recent immigrants to the United States such as the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian groups displaced by the Vietnamese War, reflect greater differences in all areas comprising “recreation style” (e.g., recreational group size, participation motives, language, attitudes toward natural resources, and facility-development preferences). It would, however, be a mistake to predict the total cultural assimilation of all these Asian groups with the simple passage of time, as suggested by the “melting pot” hypothesis, which was favored in the past. Understanding the dynamics of cultural change requires understanding the process of acculturation.

Asian American Acculturation

One explanatory model for minority recreational behavior that may be of particular interest to the Corps of Engineers is that of selective acculturation. This is an alternative to the strict Anglo-conformity assimilation model, which holds that the distinctive behavior of ethnic minority groups will invariably change with sufficient time, giving up their distinctive cultural characteristics and adopting those of the dominant group (e.g., middle-class white Americans). Gramann has persuasively argued that the Anglo-conformity model does not fit leisure/recreational behavior because these are areas in which the core cultural values of the ethnic group are maintained and expressed. Consequently, the recreational behavior of

ethnic minority groups may be highly resistant to change. The selective acculturation model predicts that while some aspects of socioeconomic behavior may change rapidly within a minority group, expressive leisure behavior, which is closely linked to the core values of the group, may persist indefinitely. The implication of this model is that the persistent recreational activities of some ethnic minority groups may require changes in management style on the part of the Corps of Engineers as a resource managing agency. Further discussion on this point appears in the section on management implications.

Research among Hispanic Americans suggests that outdoor recreation appears to provide an opportunity for certain central values of Hispanic culture to be maintained (e.g. familism), despite assimilation on other cultural dimensions, such as language (Gramann (1996:50-51)). We might anticipate similar results for Asian American groups. Unfortunately, very little research on recreation and Asian American cultural assimilation has been conducted. There is no systematic test of the selective acculturation model for Asian Americans reported in the Gramann synthesis. One 1994 Forest Service study of Chinese Americans in Chicago found that older adults of the immigrant generation differed substantially from younger, U.S.-born Chinese in their leisure preferences. Older adults listed walking, socializing, and traditional exercise, such as Tai-chi, as typical activities they preferred. In contrast, younger adults and children preferred activities that closely paralleled those of Euro-Americans (Gramann 1996:50). How far the assimilation progressed through time remains to be determined.

Gramann (1996:49) notes that there is another reason for rejecting the melting pot or Anglo-conformity model as an explanation for minority recreation behavior, the concept of boundary maintenance:

....when ethnic groups view themselves as persecuted or discriminated against, they often react by maintaining social, psychological, and physical boundaries between themselves and other groups (Buck 1978). These boundaries inhibit the assimilation process... Boundary maintenance may be one reason for the persistence, despite increasing contact with other cultures, of the distinctive ethnic identities of Old Order Amish in Pennsylvania (Buck 1978), Native Americans in the Southwest (Allison 1993), and recent Hmong immigrants who have settled in California and the Great Lakes region (Hutchison 1992). These and other cases strongly imply that interaction between minority and majority groups does not always lead to full acculturation, as predicted by the Anglo-conformity model. On the contrary, interaction may actually produce active efforts to protect core cultural values from assimilation pressures. For example, Hutchison (1992) points out that among Southeast-Asian Hmong who have settled in several Wisconsin cities, there is a commitment to preserving traditional family clan structures and older cultural traditions, even among the first generation growing up in the United States.

Asian Americans as a group show great diversity in their level of acculturation to mainstream American society. All the different Asian groups living in America could theoretically be ranked on a scale from most to least acculturated. Such diversity makes the study of Asian American recreation a formidable challenge to say the least. The approach taken here has been to focus on one Asian group and to understand how their values are

expressed in the group's recreational behavior. In this way the *process* of acculturation becomes more understandable and positive management implications become discernible. It is hoped that this approach can be carried forward to other groups and greater understanding will come as more data are obtained in the future.

The bulk of this paper will present a case study of how one particular group of Asian-Americans, the Laotian Hmong, living in the Fresno, California area, utilize two Corps of Engineers lakes, how they interact with Anglo and Hispanic visitors, and the management challenges and opportunities the Hmong present to these Corps of Engineers managers and rangers. The Hmong are among the least acculturated Asian American groups living in the United States. By understanding their cultural values and the culturally expressive behavior reflected in their recreation habits we can gain great insight into the perceptions and needs of other Asian groups. Following the case study the possible implications of the data for the Corps' working relationship with all its Asian American customers will be examined and some directions for future research will be outlined. But first a critical question must be addressed, who are the Hmong?

THE HMONG IN LAOS

The Hmong, also known as the Meo, are a tribal people from the mountainous region of northern Laos in Southeast Asia. There is an extensive body of anthropological literature on the Hmong both in English and French, which makes them probably the best-known tribal people in Laos. Prior to contact with Europeans and Americans they did not have a written language and their heritage is mainly preserved through oral tradition. That tradition reflects an origin in southern China where conflict with Chinese farmers drove many thousands of Hmong south into the mountains of Laos. Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet (1996:329) report that the Hmong had arrived in Laos by 1850 and by the end of the 19th Century, had migrated into the northern provinces of Thailand. Within Laos, the Hmong, often described as the warrior tribe, inhabit the mountain areas of Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, and Sam Neua Provinces, where they practice swidden or slash-and-burn agriculture.

There are three main groups of Hmong living in Laos—the Black, the White, and the Striped, each of which can be identified by their traditional dress and dialect. All the groups practice slash-and-burn agriculture and grow dry hill rice and maize. They raise animals and also hunt and forage to supplement their diet (Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet 1996:331). Opium poppies are the main cash crop for the Hmong and refined opium is exported on horseback to markets in Chiang Mai. They also export their well-known appliqué embroidery to the tourist markets in Northern Thailand.

The Hmong practice shifting cultivation, moving their villages when the surrounding land has been exhausted. This process of periodic relocation normally takes place over two seasons. First, an advance party finds a suitable site, builds temporary shelters, clears the land and plants rice, and only after the harvest does the rest of the group follow. Traditional Hmong villages are not usually fenced. Their houses are built of wood or bamboo at ground level. Each house has a main living area, and two or three sleeping rooms. The extended

family is headed by the oldest male member. He settles family disputes and has ultimate authority over the family.

Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet (1996:329) report that the Hmong are the only tribe in Laos who make batik. Indigo-dyed batik makes up the main panel of their skirts, with appliqué and embroidery added to it. The women also wear black leggings from their knees to their ankles, black jackets (with embroidery), and a black panel or apron, held in place with a cummerbund. Even the children wear clothes of intricate design with exquisite needlework. In the past, this cloth would have been woven by hand on a foot-peddle/back-strap loom; today it is more often purchased at market. The White Hmong tend to wear less elaborate clothing from day to day, saving it for special occasions only. Hmong men traditionally wear loose-fitting black trousers, black jackets, and colored or embroidered sashes. The Hmong particularly value silver jewelry as a signifier of wealth and a good life. Men, women, and children wear silver, tiers of neck rings, heavy silver chains with lock-shaped pendants, earrings, and pointed rings on every finger. All the family jewelry is traditionally brought out at New Year to symbolize the wealth of the family (Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet 1996:329).

Non-Christian Hmong are animists. They believe everything has a spirit or *phi*, which can be either good or bad. Shamans play a central role in village life and decision making. The phi must be placated incessantly to ward off sickness and catastrophe. It is the shaman's job to exorcise the bad phi from his patients. Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet (1996:330) indicate that until modern medicine arrived in Laos along with the Americans, opium was the Hmong's only palliative drug. Due to their lack of resistance to pharmaceuticals, the Hmong responded very quickly to the smallest doses of drugs such as penicillin. Band-aids were revered as they were thought to contain a power which drew out bad phi.

The Hmong in Laos greatly value their independence and tend to live at high altitudes, away from other tribes (Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet 1996:329). This independence, Hmong association with poppy cultivation, and their alliance with the United States during the Vietnamese War have meant that of all the hill tribes, it is the Hmong who have been the most severely persecuted. Within Laos, they are perceived to be a threat to the security of the state, a tribe that needs to be controlled and carefully watched.

In the dying days of the French colonial administration, thousands of Hmong men were recruited to help fight the Vietnamese Communists. The Hmong leader Vang Pao, who would later command 30,000 Hmong mercenaries in the U.S.-backed war against the Pathet Lao, was first picked out by a French colonel in charge of "native movements." In the 1960s, Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet (1996:330-331) reported that the Hmong were recruited and paid by the American CIA to fight the Pathet Lao. Under their General Vang Pao, remote mountain-dwelling Hmong villagers with little or no formal education were trained to fly T-28 fighter-bombers. An estimated 100,000 Hmong died during and after the Vietnamese War. After the Pathet Lao liberated Vientiane in 1975, many Hmong refugees were attacked and killed by Vietnamese troops.

When the war ended in 1975, there was a mass exodus of Hmong and today more than 100,000 live in the United States, primarily in the Pacific Coastal states and in Wisconsin and Minnesota. A small group of Hmong who stayed behind in Laos is still optimistically

fighting the Lao government but they have lost much credibility and are regarded by the majority of the Laotian people as bandits (Eliot, Bickersteth, and Colet 1996:331). The exodus of Hmong refugees reached a peak in 1979 when 3,000 a month were fleeing across the Mekong to Thailand. Thousands of these refugees fled to the United States and to France. Many of these refugees, healthy young Hmong men and women, later developed various stress disorders including heart attacks—a condition referred to as Sudden Unexplained Nocturnal Death syndrome. One author cited by Eliot et al. (1996:331) wrote that “in a simpler age it would have been said that the Hmong refugees are dying of a broken heart.”

THE HMONG IN AMERICA

Donnelly (1994) studied the process of acculturation among refugee Hmong women in the Seattle area. She provides this description of the initial Hmong experience in America:

The Hmong, who brought their silverwork, traditional clothing, knives, and sometimes agricultural tools and seed with them to America, expected a land similar to the one they had left. They found, instead, a land whose people generally had little understanding of them and were often surprised (sometimes even dismayed) at how different Hmong social interactions and values seemed from their own. Although individual Americans may alter, American institutions and their representatives usually cannot or will not change significantly to accommodate refugees. Hmong refugees have generally been expected by Americans to learn how to fit into their new environment, and they themselves have anticipated changes in their lives, welcoming some while fearing or rejecting others.

Coming to America reduces the sense of life as seamless whole for the Hmong. The dissonance between Hmong ideas of social order and American ideas has caused the Hmong to question specific cultural practices. The questioning stance of the Americans upon whom Hmong depend, a consciousness of having become materially incompetent overnight, a lack of the ingredients of ritual, causing an ever present need for substitution, and many other factors have led the resettled Hmong in two directions at once: toward preserving the essence of their cultural life in spite of having to give up the exact form or surface that they remember, but also toward questioning and discarding particular cultural practices. Hmong cultural practice as a whole is being reconstructed in a new pattern.

Donnelly (1994:183) reports that in Laos, there were seven elements that provided the backbone of Hmong identity. They include the Hmong language (not Laotian), a life high in the mountains as farmer-entrepreneurs, particular rituals (especially at New Year's), particular treatment of the dead, dressing in a certain style, political loyalty given on the basis of family ties, and certain assumptions about social hierarchy within the household. In the United States, Hmong-Americans live mainly in urban areas, dress like Americans, and make their living in a class-based society however they can. Now English is the preferred language of education. Traditional rituals are very much abbreviated and probably more than half of the

Hmong have become Christians. What then remains to make them still Hmong? First-generation Hmong refugees indicate that it is most important to retain the shape of household interactions, of family relationships, what ethnologists term social structure.

The social forms of Hmong life are best identified by the lines of respect and authority that they embody (Donnelly 1994: 184). These place each person in two hierarchies: gender and age. Old men are given more respect than young men, who receive more than boys. Old women are honored and their wishes catered to by their families. But, while old men and women are more nearly equal than young men and women, the amount of respect accorded old women is still less than that accorded old men. Females in each category are placed beneath male contemporaries because they are female, and women always owe respect to men.

Donnelly (1994:184) argues that incoming Hmong refugees in America do not seek “new lives,” they seek the same lives in a new location, and where possible they use their new opportunities to bolster preexisting social conceptions. They will generally try to preserve underlying cultural meanings even when the surface appearance is radically changed. Gradually, however, the acculturation process begins to affect even the underlying values and meanings. For example, Hmong families in Laos are best described as extended families based on ties between brothers. Hmong-American families are gradually becoming more like nuclear families based on married couples. Donnelly (194:189) attributes this change to the effects of the larger American society, which has clear assumptions regarding individuals and does not assume family solidarity at any cost.

Wives, and even children, are expected to have opinions and individual goals in American Society. Teachers, doctors, social workers, co-workers, and employees all expect individual family members to speak up, decide for themselves, and look out for their own benefit. Christianity, especially the fundamentalist Protestantism espoused by many Hmong in America, assumes individual salvation and responsibility, and the equal value of all souls. American legal process assumes that women are equal to men before the law, and in problematic cases deals with catch-hand marriage in terms of kidnap or rape.

The selective acculturation model discussed earlier predicts that while some aspects of socioeconomic behavior may change rapidly within a minority group, expressive leisure behavior which is closely linked to the core values of the group, may persist indefinitely. The implications of this is that the recreational activities of some ethnic minority customers may require changes in management style on the part of the Corps of Engineers as a resource managing agency. How do the Hmong use Corps facilities, and what are the core cultural values reflected in their recreational behavior?

DESCRIPTION OF SITE VISITS: During the fall of 1997 a number of Corps of Engineers project managers were contacted to ascertain if their projects were suitable locations for conducting focus groups with ethnic minority visitors on their recreational experiences at Corps operating projects. The managers were also informed that subsequent to each focus group, a survey instrument dealing with minority recreation preferences and experiences would be tested at their project. As a result of these contacts two Corps projects in California with high Asian-American visitation were selected in the spring of 1998 for the

Asian-American component of the work unit: Hensley Lake, and Pine Flat Lake, both located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains within the Sacramento District. Hensley Lake was visited on June 5-6, 1998; Pine Flat Lake on June 10-13, 1998.

During each visit, facilities frequented by Asian American visitors were inspected and their recreational behavior was observed. Interviews were conducted with the project manager at Pine Flat Lake and with the rangers at each lake. The author accompanied the rangers on patrol and was able to observe their interaction with Asian American visitors. Several of the interviews with Corps rangers regarding their own observations and experiences with minority visitors were videotaped at each lake. Finally, a focus group discussion dealing with Asian American recreation was conducted with a small group of Hmong visitors at the Hensley Lake project office. The participants were invited by Ms. Carrie Pratt, the ranger assigned by the project manager at Hensley Lake.

The Hensley Lake Site Visit

Hensley Lake is located in the oak woodlands of the Sierra Nevada foothills about 17 miles northeast of the town of Madera, California. The project area is just east of California's San Joaquin Valley, one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world since the introduction of irrigation. Hensley Lake, which was open to the public in 1978, was created by the construction of Hidden Dam on the Fresno River. The lake and dam provide for flood damage reduction, irrigation, recreation, and environmental stewardship (U.S. Army Engineer District, Sacramento 1998a). The area was once home to Native Americans (Miwok and Yukiut tribes) and ranchers, but now it offers a variety of recreational opportunities to many ethnic groups including Anglo, Hispanic, Japanese, and Chinese Americans, and a variety of groups from Southeast Asia. The most conspicuous of the Southeast Asian groups is the Hmong.

Hensley Lake is a relatively small Corps lake with a regional reputation as a good fishing lake. There is one campground, the Hidden View facility, one day-use area, Buckridge, and the Wakalumi equestrian facility. The northern part of the project is a wildlife area, which attracts a large number of hunters (shotgun and bow only) and fishermen. Peak visitation is between February and July when temperatures are moderate. Extreme temperatures in the late summer and heavy rains in the winter limit visitation at these times of the year. The beauty of the Sierra Nevada foothills attracts a large number of visitors from the city of Fresno located about 40 miles south of the project area. Many of the minority visitors to Hensley Lake come from Fresno.

At the time of the site visit (June 5-6, 1998) the Project Manager, Mr. Edward Armbruster, was away, so the initial interview of Corps staff at the project was conducted with Ms. Carrie Pratt, the ranger who had been assigned as the liaison with WES for the ethnic culture research. Ms. Pratt, an undergraduate anthropology major, proved to be an extremely valuable source of information on minority recreation habits and later participated in the focus group discussion with a Hmong couple and their children that will be described in a later section.

The initial interview revealed that Asian American recreation at Hensley Lake falls into two distinct types. Japanese and Chinese Americans whose families have lived in California for

several generations, and in some cases for over a century, are extremely acculturated and show no major differences in their recreation habits from most Anglo-Americans. Major differences within these Asian American groups relate more to social class and lifestyle. Asian American farmers and ranchers from nearby rural areas show distinct differences from city-dwelling middle-class professionals in their recreational preferences and in the number and types of boats and recreational vehicles they bring to the project. Group size and recreation style of these highly acculturated Asian Americans do not appear to the rangers to be very much different from most Anglo-American visitors.

Southeast Asian visitors who have come to the United States since the 1960s show much less cultural assimilation and even their children, who are generally more familiar with the English language and American customs than their parents, have not yet achieved the same level of acculturation as the Chinese- and Japanese-American groups. One ranger's recent experience was cited to serve as an illustration. An extended family of Hmong visitors visiting the Buckridge day-use area decided to prepare a traditional meal, which included the preparation of a large quantity of rice for the group. To prepare the meal, the Hmong women took over the women's restroom facilities, where the rice was being cooked and converted it to a kitchen. This behavior disgusted the Anglo- and Hispanic visitors, who were in the day-use area at the time. What seemed entirely acceptable to the Hmong violated a number of mainstream American ideas concerning privacy, hygiene, and appropriate social behavior.

The Hmong come to Hensley Lake to fish and to hunt and they are serious about both of these activities. Most Anglo visitors value the total experience of "going fishing" (e.g., the opportunity to socialize with friends and family, to drink alcohol in a relaxed outdoor setting, and to enjoy boating on the lake). The Hmong come not to socialize, but to catch fish from the shores of the lake and they set about doing so with great skill and a seriousness of purpose that strikes Anglo observers as not so much recreational but subsistence fishing.

Ranger Pratt took the author to a small cove at the south end of the lake, which the rangers have come to call Hmong Cove due to its heavy use by Hmong fishermen. Hmong men and women come here individually or in very small groups (e.g. father and son) to fish. There is no alcohol consumption, loud talking, or the kind of horseplay one might expect from a group of white visitors who were "recreating." Here there is only serenity and seriousness of purpose. Many Hmong hike fairly long distances around the lake to get to the best fishing spots. Because few Hmong own boats, it is difficult to say whether they prefer bank fishing as a cultural preference or an economic necessity. Because of the high real estate costs in this part of California, the great majority of the Hmong visitors come from the city of Fresno where extended families share apartments and it is difficult to keep boats. Boat ownership is on the rise among the second-generation Hmong according to Ranger Pratt, but unlike most white fishermen, they do not belong to fishing clubs. Hmong men also like to hunt and they are very good at it according to the Corps rangers at Hensley. Their weapon of choice is the shotgun and during the appropriate seasons individual Hmong hunters will routinely take their limit of deer, ducks, and a variety of other game birds.

The Hmong stay to themselves for the most part and do not interact a great deal with Anglo or Hispanic visitors at Hensley Lake. While most Hmong know some English they

have difficulty with posted regulations and signs around the lake. For this reason there are few citations issued to Hmong violators at Hensley Lake. The rangers prefer to use a process of education in which careful attention is paid to gestures and body language as well as verbal instruction. Corps rangers do not issue citations for fishing violations. California game wardens are responsible for dealing with all fishing violations, a situation which especially pleases the Corps rangers.

The Hmong seem to distrust Corps uniformed personnel and become very quiet and still when approached by a Corps ranger. One example of this distrust, expressed in body language, was described by Ranger Pratt in the Hmong's reaction to rangers on routine patrol. It is common for a Hmong group to stand absolutely still when approached. They will not speak first or move out of the way of an approaching vehicle. The ranger approaching in a government vehicle must thread his way through the group or retreat as the Hmong individuals will not move. Ranger Pratt described their unflinching stillness as an eerie experience for the inexperienced ranger the first time it is encountered. It appears to signify distrust of uniformed authority, an indication of innocence, and a way to draw out the intention of the Corps official.

Ranger Pratt reported that gang activity around the lake is primarily from local Hispanic groups. Gang graffiti is especially noticeable at the Buena Vista outlook and pavilion and related to the marking of territory by rival gang members. Gang conflicts between Asians and Hispanics is known to occur in the city of Fresno and seems to be increasing according to Fresno newspaper accounts. Asian gang activity is not a problem at Hensley Lake at this time. Hmong visitors will generally attempt to avoid contact with the Hispanic families who recreate at the lake. Perhaps this is because of the language problem (even fewer Hmong know Spanish). Unfortunately, the result of the Hmong's reticence for social interaction is that they are seen as unfriendly and somewhat mysterious by the Hispanic and Anglo visitors to the lake.

Hmong families will visit the swim beaches at the Buckridge day-use area and the Hidden View Campground but they are not strong swimmers and limit their activity to wading and picnics on the beach. They do not generally use the fish-cleaning stations but take their considerable catch home in coolers. In general, the Hmong enjoy the lake as an opportunity to enjoy nature but their hiking is for a purpose, to locate the best fishing possible. Recreational hiking along interpreted trails is seldom seen by the rangers.

When Ranger Pratt was asked what improvements to Corps management policies and facilities would increase the typical Hmong family's enjoyment of Hensley Lake, she replied without hesitation that increasing their sense of safety and security would be number one on the list. The Hmong are fearful of the Hispanic gang activity around the lake. They are also concerned about groups of intoxicated Anglo teenagers. More ranger patrols are needed at this somewhat isolated rural project and the Corps' ranger staff is already spread thin. Specific management implications of the Hmong's recreation style will be discussed in detail in a later section.

At the conclusion of the first day of the site visit, June 5, 1998, Ms. Pratt indicated she expected a group of 7-12 Asian Americans to attend the focus group meeting scheduled for

the next day. But before reporting on the results of that focus group, it is necessary to tell another side of the Hmong story at a Corps project 35 miles east of Fresno, Pine Flat Lake.

The Pine Flat Lake Site Visit

Pine Flat Lake is the oldest flood control project within the Sacramento District. Construction of the 429-ft-tall dam nestled in the Sierra Nevada foothills east of Fresno was completed in 1954. Pine Flat Dam is an impressive structure that impounds the waters of the Kings River and provides flood control and irrigation benefits to the San Joaquin Valley, one of the country's most productive agricultural areas. A hydroelectric plant was completed in 1984. At maximum capacity, the lake holds 1,000,000 acre-feet of water (U.S. Army Engineer District, Sacramento 1998b). There are a total of six public campgrounds at Pine Flat Lake. These are operated by Fresno County, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Corps of Engineers. The Corps maintains the Island Park and Sycamore campgrounds on a first-come, first-served basis. These campgrounds are suitable for recreational vehicle and tent camping (U.S. Army Engineer District, Sacramento 1998b). At the time of the author's visit, the Sycamore campground was closed due to budgetary constraints.

The project was visited June 10-13, 1998. Additional time was allocated at this project to collect data on Hispanic as well as Asian American recreation. The discussion presented here will focus solely on Asian American recreation. A separate technical note on Hispanic American recreation at Pine Flat Lake, California, and Canyon Lake, Texas, is in preparation.

Interviews with the senior ranger, Mr. Frank Fonseca, and the project manager, Mr. Charles Parnell, initiated the data acquisition process. In subsequent days, the author also accompanied Corps ranger Will Grove on routine patrol, interviewed other rangers regarding their experiences with minority visitors, and observed and interacted with a number of Asian-American visitors to the project.

The initial interviews revealed that the diversity of Asian groups visiting this project presents a formidable management challenge to the staff at Pine Flat Lake and the interactive education between the predominantly white rangers and their Asian customers is very much an ongoing process. An example of the communication challenge is shown in the water safety brochures created several years ago at Pine Flat Lake in Spanish and three different Asian languages (see Appendix I). Concomitant with these basic communication problems is a continuing challenge to the Corps staff to understand and meet the needs and expectations of their diverse minority clientele. They have been hampered in this effort by an outdated (1976) Master Plan and insufficient funding to make long-needed changes in their facilities to better serve the needs of their minority customers. In addition, the landscape surrounding the lake presents a unique set of management problems.

Due to the very steep terrain of the Sierra Nevada foothills, Pine Flat Lake experiences extreme fluctuations in water levels. Water surface levels fluctuate on a daily basis related to hydropower and irrigation needs. The project is also surrounded by two National Forests (Sierra and Sequoia), which presents an extreme fire hazard during the hot dry summer months. The combination of these factors has led to the prohibition of shoreline camping at this project. Even walking the very steep shorelines is quite difficult. The kind of

cross-country hiking done by the Hmong visitors at Hensley Lake would be extremely challenging at Pine Flat Lake. Consequently, a lot of fishing by Hmong visitors takes place near the dam and boat ramps where the terrain is not so steep.

In place of shoreline camping, houseboat “camping” has developed to a very high level. Six overnight mooring areas are located around the lake for the convenience of visitors who wish to spend the night aboard their vessels. In addition to those privately owned, houseboats can be rented at several marinas around the lake. This is a favorite activity of many Anglo-American families visiting the lake, but it is not a favorite one of Asian Americans. In addition to houseboats, power boating and water-skiing are extremely popular with Anglo visitors to the lake. The use of personal water craft, primarily by Anglos, is becoming increasingly popular. There are two commercial marinas on the lake located at the Deer Creek and Trimmer Recreation Areas. Boat launching ramps with courtesy docks are available at the Deer Creek, Island Park, Lakeview, and Trimmer Recreation Areas. Boat ownership and the use of boats for fishing is not common among the Asian American groups visiting Pine Flat Lake.

Unlike the majority of Hispanic American visitors, Asian American visitors to this lake do not usually use the campgrounds for overnight camping. The rangers’ perspective is that they come primarily to fish and they will also use the available day-use areas for family picnics. The average group size reported by the rangers for Asian families is six to twelve, with a large number of these being children. Group size can increase to thirty or more when an entire extended family recreates together.

The rangers have difficulty distinguishing the different Asian groups and in general are not always able to identify specific Asian groups, such as the Hmong, and consequently use the term “Asians” as a catch-all phrase. The rangers’ perspective is that the serious-minded Asians are fishing for subsistence rather than sport. They observe that many Asians come to fish just as they would go to work, almost on a daily basis. Because the Corps rangers are not charged with the enforcement of California state fishing laws, they are relieved of the burden of confronting Asian visitors who daily take too many fish, or the wrong size fish, etc. There is an undercurrent of resentment on the part of the Corps rangers that too many of the Asians break the law in this area and rangers have contacted the state game wardens to report especially outrageous violations when they become aware of them.

The ranger’s perception of illegal fishing by Asians (presumably Hmong) touches on a serious communication problem that continues to exist in spite of efforts like that shown in Appendix I. While many of the Corps rangers speak enough Spanish to make themselves understood to their Hispanic customers, none were able to speak directly to their non-English-speaking Asian visitors when the need arose and generally spoke English to the children in the group who were able to translate the ranger’s instructions to their parents. In general, rangers interacted with the Asian visitors only when they noticed a clear Title 36 violation. The combined results of the communication barrier and the perception that Asians are overfishing for subsistence has created a psychological gulf between the Asian visitors and the staff at Pine Flat Lake that will be hard to close.

Specific examples of Hmong behavior regarded as inappropriate by Corps rangers were described to the author. One specific case was described by Will Grove, a ranger of Native

American (Cherokee) ancestry at Pine Flat Lake. On patrol near sunset during the early spring with temperatures just above freezing, he came across a group of Hmong children at a day use area who were waiting for their parents to return from fishing. The children were not warmly dressed and clearly shivering in the cold and there was no adult supervision. Ranger Grove stayed with the young children, the oldest less than 10, until after dark when the parents returned. The Hmong parents did not understand why the ranger had been so concerned. When Grove later reported the incident to the sheriff, the parents were charged with criminal neglect and the ranger was required to later testify in court what he had observed. The incident is significant in that it illustrates the clash of two very different cultural systems. To Ranger Grove and the other rangers at Pine Flat Lake, the Hmong most clearly represent the “otherness” of many Asian groups. In an anthropological context the term “otherness” connotes the sense of the strange, the unfamiliar, the alien. It is imperative to break through this sense of “otherness” if the Corps is to better serve its Asian minority customers.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TWO HMONG NATIVE INFORMANTS: Ranger Carrie Pratt at Hensley Lake had begun to plan for a focus group with Asian American visitors several weeks in advance of the scheduled date of June 6, 1998. Her efforts included talking to Hmong visitors at the lake, the posting of an announcement at the project office, and contacting several Asian support agencies in the city of Fresno. Based on these efforts she anticipated that seven to twelve Asian Americans would participate in the meeting scheduled for a Saturday afternoon at the Hensley Lake Project Office. Her expectation was not met. Only one Hmong family, consisting of a husband and wife and their three children, attended the meeting (Figure 1).

In spite of the low turnout, this interview (focus groups require greater numbers) proved to be one of best experiences of the 1998 fieldwork season. The quantity and quality of information, the couple’s enthusiasm for the research, and their ability to convey the Hmong’s perspective on recreation needs was truly outstanding. The husband is a college teacher in the city of Fresno and a hunter-safety instructor for the state of California. The wife is also a college graduate who came to California from Laos as a young girl with her parents. Both spoke English fluently. Their well-behaved young children, two boys and a girl, sat through the 2-hr meeting with only occasional breaks to play outside, which were supervised by Ranger Pratt.

The meeting began in the project office break room with an air of nervous anticipation on the part of the Hmong couple. At



Figure 1. Hmong family and Ranger Carrie Pratt at Hensley Lake, CA

the outset only the husband would answer questions directly and his wife would nod her assent to his responses. However, after encouragement by the author and by her husband, the wife began to share her personal experiences growing up in California as the daughter of a political refugee whose work for the CIA in Laos put the lives of his family in jeopardy. As the meeting went on, her responses became much livelier and richer in detail. The overall tone of the meeting was very lively and enthusiastic. The smiling faces shown in Figure 1 were not just put on for the camera.

The meeting followed the format of introductions, discussion of research goals, administration of a draft survey instrument and an open discussion of the couple's responses. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, each containing 15 questions. The first section dealt with outdoor recreation style in general, including a series of questions on favorite forms of recreation, the average size of the group they recreate with, preferences for recreating with family members, preferences for types of camping facilities, forms of outdoor recreation they might wish to try in the future, experience recreating with members of other ethnic/racial groups, and a series of questions on language skills and ability to understand signs and verbal instructions at Corps projects. The second section of the questionnaire focused on their recreation participation at Corps projects. Questions sought to elicit information on the frequency of visits, hindrances to visiting the Corps facility, such as transportation problems, preferences for water-based recreation at Corps lakes, facilities they may wish for that are not currently available, safety while visiting the project, preferences for interpretive displays about natural and cultural resources, their level of comfort with other ethnic/racial groups recreating at the project, experiences with discriminatory behavior at Corps projects, and general questions dealing with the Corps' overall efforts to provide a quality recreation experience to its minority visitors and how the Corps could improve its facilities and services to increase their family's enjoyment in the future.

Outdoor Recreation Style

Regarding favorite forms of recreation, the husband listed fishing and hunting and the wife responded with having fun outdoors, playing with her children, and eating out. There were no activities listed that could be described as distinctively Asian. Both husband and wife preferred to recreate with family members. They described the average size Hmong group as consisting of six to ten family members. Neither partner had much experience with camping at Corps lakes and showed little interest in this activity. However, the wife indicated that if she were to go camping, she would prefer a campground with developed facilities and services. When asked whether the Corps should preserve wild/undeveloped areas around its lakes whenever possible, both responded affirmatively. The husband described the importance of preserving wildlife habitat whenever possible. When asked what forms of outdoor recreation they might want to try in the future, the couple described their desire to own a motorboat that could be used for fishing and pleasure boating. In general, the couple's responses reflected a relatively high level of acculturation, one which approaches that described by the Corps rangers for the Japanese- and Chinese-Americans who come to Hensley and Pine Flat Lakes.

Responding to a series of questions about their interaction with members of other racial or ethnic groups, both indicated they had numerous friends with different ethnic backgrounds

including Anglo, Hispanic, black, and other Asian groups. There ensued a lively discussion on the ethnic diversity of California and how getting to know people from ethnic groups is a good thing. The wife described how hurt she once was by racial slurs from white classmates in high school in Orange County, California. Only after she angrily confronted her persecutors and told them how much her family had suffered because of her father's support of the U.S. government in Laos did the persecution cease. Both husband and wife indicated that they worked with members of other racial and ethnic groups and that they enjoyed recreating with them when the opportunity arose. The husband's responses indicated a higher level of interaction with other ethnic groups through his work as a hunter-safety instructor.

The couple next responded to a series of questions on language ability and understanding written and verbal instructions at the Corps projects they visited. The husband indicated that he spoke four languages including English, Hmong, Laotian, and Thai. The wife spoke English, Hmong, and Laotian. They indicated that in Laos, most Hmong learn Laotian in school. When they come to the United States, they learn English if they have not already had some experience with English in Laos. While neither had any difficulty understanding posted signs at Corps projects, the wife expressed her awareness that many Hmong do have difficulty understanding the posted fishing regulations and other regulations at Corps lakes. Hmong who have emigrated to Europe before coming to the United States may also speak one or more European languages, with French as the most favored. They indicated that their children were being raised as bilingual with both Hmong and English spoken at home. During this discussion the topic of posted signs at Corps lakes came to the forefront. Both indicated that Hmong was a written as well as a spoken language and that it was certainly feasible to post signs in Hmong dealing with fishing regulations, etc. However, they expressed concern that other Asian groups would not be able to read these signs and that it might be easier to stay with English since that is the language the children are learning in school. In general, they perceived that there was a language problem but the only clear solution was the education of the next generation as speakers of English.

Recreation Participation at Corps Projects

When asked how often they visited Corps lakes, the couple responded with three to four times a year. They both indicated that they would like to go more often. In later discussion, they acknowledged that some Hmong go fishing much more frequently, e.g., several times a week. The couple described how the Hmong enjoy leaving the city of Fresno (in the valley) and coming to the rugged terrain of the Sierra Nevada foothills because it reminds them of the Hmong homeland in the mountainous region of Laos. Fishing and hunting are important Hmong activities in northern Laos and they enjoy the opportunity to visit Corps lakes for this reason.

Regarding transportation, their travel time to Hensley or Pine Flat Lakes was about an hour. While neither one had transportation problems, they were aware that many first-generation Hmong families did, since they could not afford a car and used public transportation (buses) in the city of Fresno to get to work. They opined that acquiring a car is a dream of many Hmong families and that getting a car and a driver's license is part of the total experience of becoming an American.

When asked about the water-based recreation they participated in when visiting a Corps lake, they both responded with fishing and swimming. The fishing they described was bank fishing, since they do not own a boat at this time. Other outdoor recreational activities they enjoyed included soccer, softball, and volleyball usually played as part of a family picnic.

When queried about activities or facilities they would like to see added at the Corps lakes they visited which do not currently exist they both indicated a preference for a place such as a pavilion or amphitheater in which the Hmong culture could be shared with other visitors. The wife indicated her desire to tell the story of the Hmong people and why they have come to America. The husband indicated his desire for a place where Asian cultural heritage shows could be put on several times a year. Discussion revealed their awareness that most white and Hispanic Americans know nothing about the Hmong and that it is important for the Hmong to tell their story so that other Americans would understand them better.

When asked if they felt safe when visiting a Corps lake, the husband answered yes and the wife no. Discussion on this point revealed a concern about gang activity and that some whites and Hispanics were not very friendly to Hmong visitors. When asked if they felt welcome by the Corps personnel at the lake, the husband indicated that he did personally but that many Hmong are afraid that the rangers will give them citations when they don't understand the rules (e.g. fishing) and inadvertently break them. In general, this couple felt comfortable visiting the lake because they could easily communicate with the Corps rangers and other visitors to the lake.

When asked if they ever felt discriminated against when visiting the Corps lake, the husband indicated that he did not personally but that he was aware that some Hmong had experienced such problems. The wife indicated that she had felt discrimination in the form of racist comments made by other visitors to the lake. Neither one had ever had any such problems with Corps uniformed or contract personnel.

When asked for their overall appraisal of the Corps' performance in providing services to minority visitors, the husband indicated that, in his opinion, the Corps was doing a good job but there was room for improvement in communication and trying to understand visitors with different cultural backgrounds. The wife also indicated that communication is the major problem and that at the Corps lakes with highest Hmong visitation, signs in the Hmong language (e.g. related to fishing regulations) would be a good way to improve relations between the game wardens, the Corps rangers, and the Hmong visitors. She expressed her belief that if the Hmong really understood the rules, they would obey them. In terms of facilities, both indicated that more restrooms and playground facilities in the day-use areas are needed.

At the conclusion of this very spirited discussion, a group photograph was taken which included Corps ranger Carrie Pratt (Figure 1), and the discussants were warmly thanked for their participation. For the author, at least, this interview had done a great deal to dispel the public image of the Hmong as strange, mysterious, and alien.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CORPS: Executive Order 12862 issued on September 11, 1993 requires Federal Agencies to (a) identify the customers who are, or should be, served by the agency, and (b) survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services. The purpose

of developing information on customer satisfaction is to set standards that will allow Federal agencies to “provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector.”

Executive Order 12898 issued on February 11, 1994 directs Federal agencies to “identify differential patterns of consumption of natural resources among minority populations and low-income populations” and ensure that programs, policies, or activities that substantially affect human health or the environment (including presumably outdoor recreation operations) do not exclude persons from receiving the benefits of such programs as a result of race, color, or national origin. Furthermore, each Federal agency is ordered to, whenever practicable, collect, maintain, and analyze information on the race and national origin of residents of areas surrounding Federal facilities or sites that have substantial environmental, human-health, or economic effects on nearby populations. (Gramann 1996:14).

With the creation and continued funding of the work unit on Ethnic Culture and Corps Recreation Participation, the Corps of Engineers has set in motion an effort to comply with the requirements of these Executive Orders. Full compliance will involve some changes in the way the Corps currently interacts with its ethnic minority customers. Recommended changes to make Corps operational projects more user-friendly to Asian Americans can be grouped into three general areas: facilities, management, and policy. The following preliminary recommendations include those proposed by Asian Americans and project personnel at two Corps lakes who interact with Asian American visitors on a daily basis.

Facilities

Project managers are strongly encouraged to upgrade their facilities to match the needs of their specific Asian American customers. Since Asian Americans display great diversity in their national origin and their recreational preferences, treating them as a culturally homogeneous bloc would be a serious mistake. Communication with the Asian American customer base is the answer. User survey instruments, such as the one under development at WES, as well as public meetings, focus groups, and in-depth discussions such as the one conducted at Hensley Lake, are highly recommended methods to determine the kinds of improvements desired by minority customers. Facility improvements recommended by the Asian American discussants at Hensley Lake and by the rangers at the two California lakes visited included the following:

- a. Add interpretive displays dealing with the cultures of Asian American visitors at projects with high Asian American visitation.
- b. Post pertinent signs and regulations in Asian languages where Asian American visitation is highest, such as the fishing area at Hensley Lake known as Hmong Cove.
- c. Construct pavilions, amphitheaters, etc., where cultural shows, displays, and story telling could be performed by Asian Americans and enjoyed by all visitors to the project.
- d. Improve day-use areas by adding more playground equipment for children and more conveniently located restrooms for bank fishermen.

- e. Add ball fields (soccer, softball, baseball) in day-use areas, which could be used by multiple large family groups.
- f. Make shoreline improvements oriented toward bank fishing (e.g., construction of fishing piers, fish habitat improvement such as submerging old Christmas trees, etc.).

Services

Improvements in Corps services seen as highly desirable by Asian Americans include the following:

- a. Increase ranger patrols and law enforcement efforts in areas with gang activity.
- b. Hire Asian American rangers or provide training for rangers to better understand Asian minority visitors (e.g., instruction in one or more Asian languages, courses in Cultural Anthropology, etc.).
- c. Increase local efforts to reach out to diverse Asian American communities (e.g., ranger visits to schools with high numbers of Asian children to give lectures on water safety, natural resources, etc.).
- d. Offer hunter safety courses geared for Asian Americans and taught in the Asian language(s) determined most prevalent at the project.

Policy

Based on the results of this preliminary research on Asian Americans, the following recommendations may be appropriate for Corps policy makers:

- a. Adopt a proactive stance toward cost-sharing with Asian American communities in the construction of new facilities at Corps projects with high Asian American visitation.
- b. Make more aggressive attempts to hire Asian American rangers at projects with high Asian American visitation.
- c. Hire rangers and gate attendant contractors with good people skills; provide specific language training to match the minority visitor customer base.
- d. Increase coordination and involvement with the Asian American communities located near Corps projects; expand this coordination and involvement to visitor source areas, such as Fresno, where large numbers of Asian American visitors reside.
- e. Increase flexibility in allowing Asian American community and cultural events to take place at Corps projects.

FUTURE RESEARCH: According to present projections of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, with the exception of Hawaii, the Euro-American population is expected to decline in the future as a percentage of the total population in each of the southwestern and Pacific Coastal states. In contrast, the percentage of Hispanic residents should increase considerably in all southwestern states, while California should also experience major growth in the proportion of its Asian American population (Gramann 1996:7). Compared with other ethnic groups in the United States, there is a genuine scarcity of basic data on the outdoor

recreation behaviors, styles, and constraints of Asian Americans. The current data deficiency includes a specific lack of information on how cultural assimilation might affect the recreation style of new Asian immigrants. Future leisure research will be increasingly directed toward correcting these deficiencies. We can anticipate the expansion of future academic research to more groups of Asian Americans and in different regions of the country. What about the practical concerns of the Corps of Engineers at this time?

Based on this preliminary study at two Corps lakes, it is essential to gather more basic data on recreation style and participation from a larger sample of Asian American visitors, a sample that should go beyond the Hmong and include a greater diversity of Asian groups. To accomplish this, the draft version of the survey instrument used as a focus of discussion at Hensley Lake will be revised and further tested through its administration to a larger number of Asian American visitors at both projects during the spring and early summer of 1999.

Future work under the WES work unit on Ethnic Culture and Corps Recreation Participation will include the preparation of a technical note on Hispanic American recreation. A technical report encompassing research on all four minority groups being studied is scheduled for completion by the fall of 1999. A final version of the Ethnic Minority User Survey instrument will also be delivered as a final product of the work unit.

The research presented in this technical note provides pertinent data for future use by academic researchers. It has also identified some pragmatic management concerns for the Corps of Engineers. The Corps' single greatest management need at this time is better two-way communication with its Asian American customers. Greater efforts by Corps rangers and managers to communicate with Asian American visitors and to understand minority visitor behavior in its cultural context will pay great dividends. For Asian American family members who come to Corps projects, the feeling of being welcomed and highly valued will greatly increase their own pursuit of happiness as American citizens and result in their greater recreation participation. For the Corps, such efforts will bring not only compliance with executive branch policy, they will greatly enhance the Corps' reputation as a Federal agency keen on providing equitable and high quality customer service to all Americans.

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